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READING ON THE RAIL

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CHAMPE'S ADVENTURE

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BY

GENERAL HENRY LEE

NEW-YORK
OFFICE OF THE REBELLION RECORD
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CHAMPE'S ADVENTURE.

THE treason of Benedict Arnold, the capture of Major André, and the intelligence received by General Washington through his confidential agents in New-York, that many of his officers, and especially a major-general, were connected with Arnold, engrossed his mind entirely, and excited the most unpleasant reflections. The moment he reached the army, then under the command of Major-General Greene, encamped in the vicinity of Tappan, he sent for Major Henry Lee,* posted with the light troops some distance in front. This officer repaired to headquarters with celerity, and found the General in his marquée alone, busily engaged in

* The author of this paper held the rank of major, and was serving under General Washington, on the Hudson River, at the time of the capture of André in 1780..—Ed.

writing. As soon as Lee entered, he was requested to take a seat, and a bundle of papers, lying on the table was given to him for perusal. In these much information was detailed, tending to prove that Arnold was not alone in the base conspiracy just detected, but that the poison had spread; and that a major-general, whose name was not concealed, was certainly as guilty as Arnold himself. This officer had enjoyed, without interruption, the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief throughout the war; nor did there exist a single reason in support of the accusation. It altogether rested upon the intelligence derived from the papers before him. Major Lee, personally acquainted with the accused, could not refrain from suggesting the probability, that the whole was a contrivance of Sir Henry Clinton, in order to destroy that confidence between the commander and his officers on which the success of military operations depends. This suggestion, Washington replied, was plausible, and deserved due consideration. It had early occurred to his own mind, and had not been

slightly regarded; but his reflections settled in a conclusion not to be shaken; as the same suggestion applied to no officer more forcibly than a few days ago it would have done to General Arnold, known now to be a traitor.

Announcing this result of his meditations with the tone and countenance of a mind deeply agitated, and resolved upon its course, Lee continuing silent, the General proceeded: "I have sent for you, in the expectation that you have in your corps individuals capable and willing to undertake an indispensable, delicate, and hazardous project. Whoever comes forward upon this occasion will lay me under great obligations personally, and in behalf of the United States I will reward him amply. No time is to be lost: he must proceed, if possible, this night. My object is to probe to the bottom the afflicting intelligence contained in the papers you have just read; to seize Arnold, and by getting him to save André. They are all connected. While my emissary is engaged in preparing means for the seizure of Arnold, the guilt

of others can be traced; and the timely delivery of Arnold to me, will possibly put it into my power to restore the amiable and unfortunate André to his friends. My instructions are ready, in which you will find my express orders that Arnold is not to be hurt; but that he be permitted to escape if to be prevented only by killing him, as his public punishment is the sole object in view. This you cannot too forcibly press upon whomsoever may engage in the enterprise; and this fail not to do. With my instructions are two letters, to be delivered as ordered, and here are some guineas for expenses."

Major Lee replying, said, that he had little or no doubt but that his legion contained many individuals daring enough for any operation, however perilous; but that the one in view required a combination of qualities not easily to be found unless in a commissioned officer, to whom he could not venture to propose an enterprise, the first step to which was desertion. That though the sergeant-major of the cavalry was in all respects qualified for the delicate and adventurous

project, and to him it might be proposed without indelicacy, as his station did not interpose the obstacle before stated; yet it was very probable that the same difficulty would occur in his breast, to remove which would not be easy, if practicable.

Washington was highly pleased at finding that a non-commissioned officer was deemed capable of executing his views; as he had felt extreme difficulty in authorizing an invitation to officers, who generally are, and always ought to be, scrupulous and nice in adhering to the course of honor. He asked the name, the country, the age, the size, length of service, and character of the sergeant.

Being told his name—that he was a native of Loudon County in Virginia; about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age—that he had enlisted in 1776—rather above the common size—full of bone and muscle; with a saturnine countenance, grave, thoughtful, and taciturn—of tried courage and inflexible perseverance, and as likely to reject an overture coupled with ignominy as any officer in the

corps—a commission being the goal of his long and anxious exertions, and certain on the first vacancy—the General exclaimed, that he was the very man for the business; that he must undertake it; and that going to the enemy by the instigation and at the request of his officer, was not desertion, although it appeared to be so. And he enjoined that this explanation, as coming from him, should be pressed on Champe; and that the vast good in prospect should be contrasted with the mere semblance of doing wrong, which he presumed could not fail to conquer every scruple. Major Lee assured the General, that every exertion would be essayed on his part to execute his wishes; and taking leave, returned to the camp of the light corps, which he reached about eight o'clock at night. Sending instantly for the sergeant-major, he introduced the business in the way best calculated, as he thought, to produce his concurrence; and dilated largely on the very great obligations he would confer on the Commander-in-Chief, whose unchanging and active beneficence to the troops had justly drawn

to him their affection, which would be merely nominal, if, when an opportunity should offer to any individual of contributing to the promotion of his views, that opportunity was not zealously embraced. That the one now presented to him had never before occurred, and in all probability never would occur again, even should the war continue for ages; it being most rare for three distinct consequences, all of primary weight, to be comprised within a single operation, and that operation necessarily to be entrusted to one man, who would want but one or two associates in the active part of its execution. That the chance of detection became extremely narrow, and consequently that of success enlarged. That by succeeding in the safe delivery of Arnold, he not only gratified his General in the most acceptable manner, but he would be hailed as the avenger of the reputation of the army, stained by foul and wicked perfidy; and what could not but be highly pleasing, he would be the instrument of saving the life of Major André, soon to be brought before a court of inquiry, the

decision of which could not be doubted, from the universally known circumstances of the case, and had been anticipated in the General's instructions. That, by investigating with diligence and accuracy the intelligence communicated to him, he would bring to light new guilt, or he would relieve innocence (as was most probable) from distrust; quieting the torturing suspicions which now harrowed the mind of Washington, and restoring again to his confidence a once honored general, possessing it at present only ostensibly, as well as hush doubts affecting many of his brother soldiers.

In short, the accomplishment of so much good was in itself too attractive to be renounced by a generous mind; and when connected with the recollection of the high honor which the selection shed upon him, as a soldier he ought not—he must not pause. This discourse was followed by a detail of the plan, with a wish that he would enter upon its execution instantly. Champe listened with deep attention, and with a highly excited countenance; the perturbations of his breast

not being hid even by his dark visage. He briefly and modestly replied, that no soldier exceeded him in respect and affection for the Commander-in-Chief, to serve whom he would willingly lay down his life; and that he was sensible of the honor conferred by the choice of him for the execution of a project all over arduous; nor could he be at a loss to know to whom was to be ascribed the preference bestowed, which he took pleasure in acknowledging, although increasing obligations before great and many.

That he was charmed with the plan. Even its partial success would lead to great good; as it would give peace to the General's mind, and do justice, as he hoped, to innocence. Full success, added powerful and delicious personal excitements, as well as the gratification of the General and army. He was not, he said, deterred by the danger and difficulty which was evidently to be encountered, but he was deterred by the ignominy of desertion, to be followed by the hypocrisy of enlisting with the enemy; neither of which comported with his feelings, and either placed

an insuperable bar in his way to promotion.

He concluded by observing, that if any mode could be contrived free from disgrace, he would cordially embark in the enterprise. As it was, he prayed to be excused; and hoped that services, always the best in his power to perform, faithfully performed, entitled his prayer to success. The objections at first apprehended now to be combated, were extended to a consequence which had not suggested itself. Lee candidly admitted that he had expected the first objection made, and that only; which had been imparted to the General, who gave to it full consideration, and concluded by declaring that the crime of desertion was not incurred; as no act done by the soldier at the request of the Commander-in-Chief could be considered as desertion; and that an action so manifestly praiseworthy as that to be performed, when known, would dissipate by its own force the reflections excited by appearances, leaving the actor in the full enjoyment of the rich rewards of his virtue. That the reflecting mind ought not

to balance between the achievement of so much good and the doing wrong in semblance only; to which Major Lee subjoined, that he had considered himself and corps highly honored by the General's call upon him for a soldier capable and willing to execute a project so tempting to the brave; and that he should feel himself reduced to a mortifying condition, if the resistance to the undertaking compelled him to inform the General that he must recur to some other corps to provide an agent to execute this bold and important enterprise.

He entreated the Sergeant to ask himself what must be the reflections of his comrades, if a soldier from some other corps should execute the attempt, when they should be told that the glory transferred to the regiment of which he was one might have been enjoyed by the legion, had not Sergeant Champe shrunk from the overture made to him by his General, rather than reject scruples too narrow and confined to be permitted to interfere with grand and virtuous deeds. The *esprit du corps* could not be resisted; united

to his inclination, it subdued his prejudices, and he declared his willingness to conform to the wishes of the General; relying, as he confidently did, that his reputation would be protected by those who had induced him to undertake the enterprise, should he be unfortunate.

The instructions were read to him, and each distinct object presented plainly to his view, of which he took notes so disguised as to be understood only by himself. He was particularly cautioned to use the utmost circumspection in delivering his letters, and to take care to withhold from the two individuals, addressed under feigned names, knowledge of each other; for although both had long been in the confidence of the General, yet it was not known by either that the other was so engaged.

He was further urged to bear in constant recollection the solemn injunction so pointedly expressed in the instructions to Major Lee, of forbearing to kill Arnold in any condition of things.

This part of the business being finished, their deliberation was turned to the manner

of Champe's desertion; for it was well known to them both that to pass the numerous patrols of horse and foot crossing from the stationary guards, was itself difficult, which was now rendered more so by parties thrown occasionally beyond the place called Liberty Pole, as well as by swarms of irregulars, induced sometimes to venture down to the very point at Paulus Hook with the hope of picking up booty. Evidently discernible as were the difficulties in the way, no relief could be administered by Major Lee, lest it might induce a belief that he was privy to the desertion, which opinion getting to the enemy would involve the life of Champe. The Sergeant was left to his own resources and to his own management, with the declared determination, that in case his departure should be discovered before morning, Lee would take care to delay pursuit as long as practicable.

Giving to the Sergeant three guineas, and presenting his best wishes, he recommended him to start without delay, and enjoined him to communicate his arrival in New-York as soon as he could. Champe pulling out his

watch, compared it with the Major's, reminding the latter of the importance of holding back pursuit, which he was convinced would take place in the course of the night, and which might be fatal, as he knew that he should be obliged to zig-zag in order to avoid the patrols, which would consume time. It was now nearly eleven. The Sergeant returned to camp, and taking his cloak, valise, and orderly book, he drew his horse from the picket, and mounting him, put himself upon fortune. Lee, charmed with his expeditious consummation of the first part of the enterprise, retired to rest. Useless attempt! the past scene could not be obliterated; and, indeed, had that been practicable, the interruption which ensued would have stopped repose.

Within half an hour Captain Carnes, officer of the day, waited upon the Major, and with considerable emotion told him that one of the patrol had fallen in with a dragoon, who, being challenged, put spur to his horse and escaped, though instantly pursued. Lee complaining of the interruption, and pretending

to be extremely fatigued by his ride to and from headquarters, answered as if he did not understand what had been said, which compelled the Captain to repeat it. "Who can the fellow that was pursued be?" inquired the Major; adding, a "countryman, probably." "No," replied the Captain, "the patrol sufficiently distinguished him to know that he was a dragoon; probably one from the army, if not certainly one of our own." This idea was ridiculed from its improbability, as during the whole war but a single dragoon had deserted from the legion. This did not convince Carnes, so much stress was it now the fashion to lay on the desertion of Arnold, and the probable effect of his example. The Captain withdrew to examine the squadron of horse, whom he had ordered to assemble in pursuance of established usage on similar occasions. Very quickly he returned, stating that the scoundrel was known, and was no less a person than the Sergeant-Major, who had gone off with his horse, baggage, arms, and orderly book—so presumed, as neither the one nor the other could be found. Sensibly affected

at the supposed baseness of a soldier extremely respected, the Captain added that he had ordered a party to make ready for pursuit, and begged the Major's written orders.

Occasionally this discourse was interrupted and every idea suggested which the excellent character of the Sergeant warranted, to induce the suspicion that he had not deserted, but had taken the liberty to leave camp with a view to personal pleasure—an example, said Lee, too often set by the officers themselves, destructive as it was of discipline, opposed as it was to orders, and disastrous as it might prove to the corps in the course of service.

Some little delay was thus interposed; but it being now announced that the pursuing party was ready, Major Lee directed a change in the officer, saying that he had a particular service in view, which he had determined to entrust to the lieutenant ready for duty, and which probably must be performed in the morning. He therefore directed him to summon Cornet Middleton for the present command. Lee was induced thus to act, first to add to the delay, and next from his knowledge

of the tenderness of Middleton's disposition, which he hoped would lead to the protection of Champe, should he be taken. Within ten minutes Middleton appeared to receive his orders, which were delivered to him made out in the customary form, and signed by the Major. "Pursue as far as you can with safety Sergeant Champe, who is suspected of deserting to the enemy, and has taken the road leading to Paulus Hook. Bring him alive, that he may suffer in the presence of the army; but kill him if he resists, or escapes after being taken."

Detaining the Cornet a few minutes longer in advising him what course to pursue—urging him to take care of the horse and accoutrements, if recovered, and enjoining him to be on his guard, lest he might, by his eager pursuit, improvidently fall into the hands of the enemy, the Major dismissed Middleton, wishing him success. A shower of rain fell soon after Champe's departure, which enabled the pursuing dragoons to take the trail of his horse; knowing, as officer and trooper did, the make of their shoes,

the impression of which was an unerring guide.*

When Middleton departed, it was a few minutes past twelve; so that Champe had only the start of rather more than an hour—by no means as long as was desired. Lee became very unhappy, not only because the estimable and gallant Champe might be injured, but lest the enterprise might be delayed; and he spent a sleepless night. The pursuing party during the night was, on their part, delayed by the necessary halts to examine occasionally the road, as the impression of the horse's shoes directed their course; this was unfortunately too evident, no other horse having passed along the road since the shower. When the day broke Middleton was no longer forced to halt, and he pressed on with rapidity. Ascending an eminence before he reached the Three Pigeons, some miles on the

* The horses being all shod by our own farriers, the shoes were made in the same form; which, with a private mark annexed to the fore-shoes, and known to the troopers, pointed out the trail of our dragoons to each other, which was often very useful.

north of the village of Bergen, as the pursuing party reached its summit, Champe was descried not more than half a mile in front. Resembling an Indian in vigilance, the Sergeant at the same moment discovered the party, whose object he was no stranger to, and giving spur to his horse, he determined to outstrip his pursuers. Middleton at the same instant put his horses to the top of their speed; and being, as the legion all were, well acquainted with the country, he recollected a short route through the woods to the bridge below Bergen, which diverged from the great road just after you gain the Three Pigeons. Reaching the point of separation, he halted, and dividing his party, directed a sergeant with a few dragoons to take the near cut, and possess with all possible despatch the bridge, while he with the residue followed Champe, not doubting but that Champe must deliver himself up, as he would be closed between himself and his sergeant. Champe did not forget the short cut, and would have taken it himself, but he knew it was the usual route of our parties when returning in the day from

the neighborhood of the enemy, properly preferring the woods to the road. He consequently avoided it; and persuaded that Middleton would avail himself of it, wisely resolved to relinquish his intention of getting to Paulus Hook, and to seek refuge from two British galleys lying a few miles to the west of Bergen.

This was a station always occupied by one or two galleys, and which it was known now lay there. Entering the village of Bergen, Champe turned to his right, and disguising his change of course as much as he could by taking the beaten streets, turning as they turned, he passed through the village and took the road toward Elizabethtown Point. Middleton's sergeant gained the bridge, where he concealed himself, ready to pounce upon Champe when he came up; and Middleton, pursuing his course through Bergen, soon got also to the bridge, when, to his extreme mortification, he found that the Sergeant had slipped through his fingers. Returning up the road, he inquired of the villagers of Bergen, whether a dragoon had been seen that

morning ahead of his party. He was answered in the affirmative, but could learn nothing satisfactorily as to the route he took. While engaged in inquiries himself, he spread his party through the village to strike the trail of Champe's horse, a resort always recurred to. Some of his dragoons hit it just as the Sergeant, leaving the village, got in the road to the Point. Pursuit was renewed with vigor, and again Champe was descried. He, apprehending the event, had prepared himself for it, by lashing his valise (containing his clothes and orderly book) on his shoulders, and holding his drawn sword in his hand, having thrown away the scabbard. This he did to save what was indispensable to him, and to prevent any interruption to his swimming, should Middleton, as he presumed, when disappointed at the bridge, take the measures adopted by him. The pursuit was rapid and close, as the stop occasioned by the Sergeant's preparations for swimming had brought Middleton within two or three hundred yards. As soon as Champe got abreast of the two galleys, he dismounted, and running through

the marsh to the river, plunged into it, calling upon the galleys for help. This was readily given; they fired upon our horse, and sent a boat to meet Champe, who was taken in and carried on board, and conveyed to New-York with a letter from the captain of the galley, stating the circumstances he had seen.

The horse with his equipments, the Sergeant's cloak and scabbard, were recovered; the sword itself, being held by Champe until he plunged into the river, was lost, as Middleton found it necessary to retire without searching for it.

About three o'clock in the evening our party returned, and the soldiers seeing the well-known horse in our possession, made the air resound with exclamations that the scoundrel was killed.

Major Lee, called by this heart-rending annunciation from his tent, saw the Sergeant's horse led by one of Middleton's dragoons, and began to reproach himself with the blood of the high prized, faithful, and intrepid Champe. Stifling his agony, he advanced to meet Middleton, and became somewhat relieved as

soon as he got near enough to discern the countenance of his officer and party. There was evidence in their looks of disappointment, and he was quickly relieved by Middleton's information that the Sergeant had effected his escape with the loss of his horse, and narrated the particulars just recited.

Lee's joy was now as full as, the moment before, his torture had been excruciating. Never was a happier conclusion. The Sergeant escaped unhurt, carrying with him to the enemy undeniable testimony of the sincerity of his desertion—cancelling every apprehension before entertained, lest the enemy might suspect him of being what he really was.

Major Lee imparted to the Commander-in-Chief the occurrence, who was sensibly affected by the hair-breadth escape of Champe, and anticipated with pleasure the good effect sure to follow the enemy's knowledge of its manner.

On the fourth day after Champe's departure, Lee received a letter from him, written the day before in a disguised hand, without any

signature, and stating what had passed after he got on board the galley, where he was kindly received.

He was carried to the Commandant of New-York as soon as he arrived, and presented the letter addressed to this officer from the captain of the galley. Being asked to what corps he belonged, and a few other common questions, he was sent under care of an orderly sergeant to the Adjutant-General, who, finding that he was sergeant-major of the legion of horse, heretofore remarkable for their fidelity, began to interrogate him. He was told by Champe, that such was the spirit of defection which prevailed among the American troops in consequence of Arnold's example, that he had no doubt, if the temper was properly cherished, Washington's ranks would not only be greatly thinned, but that some of his best corps would leave him. To this conclusion, the Sergeant said, he was led by his own observations, and especially by his knowledge of the discontents which agitated the corps to which he had belonged. His size, place of birth, form, countenance,

hair, the corps in which he had served, with other remarks in conformity to the British usage, was noted down. After this was finished, he was sent to the Commander-in-Chief, in charge of one of the staff, with a letter from the Adjutant-General. Sir Henry Clinton treated him very kindly, and detained him more than one hour, asking him many questions, all leading—first, to know to what extent this spirit of defection might be pushed by proper incitements—what the most operating incitements—whether any general officers were suspected by Washington as concerned in Arnold's conspiracy, or any other officers of note—who they were, and whether the troops approved or censured Washington's suspicions—whether his popularity in the army was sinking, or continued stationary. What was Major André's situation—whether any change had taken place, in the manner of his confinement—what was the current opinion of his probable fate—and whether it was thought Washington would treat him as a spy. To these various interrogations, some of which were perplexing,

Champe answered warily; exciting, nevertheless, hopes that the adoption of proper measures to encourage desertion (of which he could not pretend to form an opinion) would certainly bring off hundreds of the American soldiers, including some of the best troops, horse as well as foot. Respecting the fate of André, he said he was ignorant, though there appeared to be a general wish in the army that his life should not be taken; and that he believed it would depend more upon the disposition of Congress, than on the will of Washington.

After this long conversation ended, Sir Henry presented Champe with a couple of guineas, and recommended him to wait upon General Arnold, who was engaged in raising an American legion in the service of his majesty. He directed one of his aids to write to Arnold by Champe, stating who he was, and what he had said about the disposition in the army to follow his example; which being soon done, the letter was given to the orderly attending on Champe to be presented with the deserter to General Arnold. Arnold

expressed much satisfaction on hearing from Champe the manner of his escape, and the effect of Arnold's example; and concluded his numerous inquiries by assigning quarters to the Sergeant—the same as were occupied by his recruiting sergeants.

He also proposed to Champe to join his legion, telling him he would give him the same station he had held in the rebel service, and promising further advancement when merited. Expressing his wish to retire from war, and his conviction of the certainty of his being hung if ever taken by the rebels, he begged to be excused from enlistment; assuring the General, that should he change his mind, he would certainly accept his offer. Retiring to his quarters, Champe now turned his attention to the delivery of his letters, which he could not effect until the next night, and then only to one of the two incogniti to whom he was recommended. This man received the Sergeant with extreme attention, and having read the letter, assured Champe that he might rely on his faithful coöperation in every thing in his power consistent with

his safety, to guard which required the utmost prudence and circumspection. The sole object in which the aid of this individual was required, regarded the general and others of our army, implicated in the information sent to Washington by him. To this object Champe urged his attention, assuring him of the solicitude it had excited, and telling him that its speedy investigation had induced the General to send him to New-York.

Promising to enter upon it with zeal, and engaging to send out Champe's letters to Major Lee, he fixed the time and place for their next meeting, when they separated.

Lee made known to the General what had been transmitted to him by Champe, and received in answer directions to press Champe to the expeditious conclusion of his mission, as the fate of André would be soon decided, when little or no delay could be admitted in executing whatever sentence the court might decree. The same messenger who brought Champe's letter, returned with the ordered communication. Five days had nearly elapsed after reaching New-York, before

Champe saw the confidant to whom only the attempt against Arnold was to be intrusted. This person entered with promptitude into the design, promising his cordial assistance. To procure a proper associate for Champe was the first object, and this he promised to do with all possible despatch. Furnishing a conveyance to Lee, we again heard from Champe, who stated what I have related, with the additional intelligence that he had that morning (the last of September) been appointed one of Arnold's recruiting sergeants, having enlisted the day before with Arnold, and that he was induced to take this afflicting step, for the purpose of securing uninterrupted ingress and egress to the house which the General occupied, it being indispensable to a speedy conclusion of the difficult enterprise which the information he had just received had so forcibly urged. He added, that the difficulties in his way were numerous and stubborn, and that his prospect of success was by no means cheering. With respect to the additional treason, he asserted that he had every reason to believe that it was

groundless; that the report took its rise in the enemy's camp, and that he hoped soon to clear up that matter satisfactorily. The pleasure which the last part of this communication afforded was damped by the tidings it imparted respecting Arnold, as on his speedy delivery depended André's relief. The interposition of Sir Henry Clinton, who was extremely anxious to save his aid-de-camp, still continued; and it was expected the examination of witnesses and the defence of the prisoner, would protract the decision of the court of inquiry, now assembled, and give sufficient time for the consummation of the project committed to Champe. A complete disappointment took place from a quarter unforeseen and unexpected. The honorable and accomplished André, knowing his guilt, disdained defence, and prevented the examination of witnesses by confessing the character in which he stood. On the next day (the second of October) the court again assembled; when every doubt that could possibly arise in the case having been removed by the previous confession, André was de-

clared to be a spy, and condemned to suffer accordingly.

The sentence was executed on the subsequent day in the usual form, the Commander-in-Chief deeming it improper to interpose any delay. In this decision he was warranted by the very unpromising intelligence received from Champe, by the still existing implication of other officers in Arnold's conspiracy, by a due regard to public opinion, and by real tenderness to the condemned.

Neither Congress nor the nation could have been with propriety informed of the cause of the delay, and without such information it must have excited in both alarm and suspicion. André himself could not have been intrusted with the secret, and would consequently have attributed the unlooked-for event to the expostulation and exertion of Sir Henry Clinton, which would not fail to produce in his breast expectations of ultimate relief; to excite which would have been cruel, as the realization of such expectation depended upon a possible but improbable contingency. The fate of André, hastened by

himself, deprived the enterprise committed to Champe of a feature which had been highly prized by its projector, and which had very much engaged the heart of the individual chosen to execute it.

Washington ordered Major Lee to communicate what had passed to the Sergeant, with directions to encourage him to prosecute with unrelaxed vigor the remaining objects of his instructions, but to intermit haste in the execution only as far as was compatible with final success.

This was accordingly done by the first opportunity. Champe deplored the sad necessity which had occurred, and candidly confessed that the hope of enabling Washington to save the life of André, (who had been the subject of universal commiseration in the American camp,) greatly contributed to remove the serious difficulties which opposed his acceding to the proposition when first propounded. Some documents accompanied this communication, tending to prove the innocence of the accused general; they were completely satisfactory, and did credit to the discrimina-

tion, zeal, and diligence of the Sergeant. Lee inclosed them immediately to the Commander-in-Chief, who was pleased to express the satisfaction he derived from the information, and to order the Major to wait upon him the next day, when the whole subject was re-examined, and the distrust heretofore entertained of the accused was for ever dismissed.* Nothing now remained to be done but the seizure and safe delivery of Arnold. To this subject Champe gave his undivided attention; and on the nineteenth October, Major Lee received from him a very particular account of the progress he had made, with the outlines of his plan. This was, without delay,

* *Copy of a letter from General Washington to Major Lee, in his own handwriting.*

October 13, 1780.

DEAR SIR: I am very glad your letter, of this date, has given strength to my conviction of the innocence of the gentleman who was the subject of your inquiry

I want to see you on a particular piece of business. If the day is fair, and nothing of consequence intervenes, I will be at the Marquis's quarters by ten o'clock to-morrow. If this should not happen, I shall be glad to see you at headquarters.

I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

submitted to Washington, with a request for a few additional guineas. The General's letter,*

* *Copy of a letter from General Washington to Major Lee, in his own handwriting.*

HEADQUARTERS, October 30, 1780.

DEAR SIR: The plan proposed for taking A——d (the outlines of which are communicated in your letter, which was this moment put into my hands without date) has every mark of a good one. I therefore agree to the promised rewards; and have such entire confidence in your management of the business, as to give it my fullest approbation; and leave the whole to the guidance of your own judgment, with this expressed stipulation and pointed injunction, that he (A——d) is brought to me alive.

No circumstance whatever shall obtain my consent to his being put to death. The idea which would accompany such an event, would be that ruffians had been hired to assassinate him. My aim is to make a public example of him; and this should be strongly impressed upon those who are employed to bring him off. The Sergeant must be very circumspect—too much zeal may create suspicion, and too much precipitancy may defeat the project. The most inviolable secrecy must be observed on all hands. I send you five guineas; but I am not satisfied of the propriety of the Sergeant's appearing with much specie. This circumstance may also lead to suspicion, as it is but too well known to the enemy that we do not abound in this article.

The interviews between the party in and out of the city, should be managed with much caution and seeming indifference; or else the frequency of their meeting, etc., may betray the design, and involve bad consequences; but I am persuaded you will place every matter in a proper point of view to the conductors of this interesting business, and therefore I shall only add, that I am, dear sir, etc., etc.,

G. WASHINGTON.

written on the same day, (twentieth October,) evinces his attention to the minutiæ of business, as well as his immutable determination to possess Arnold alive, or not at all. This was his original injunction, which he never omitted to enforce upon every proper occasion.

Major Lee had an opportunity in the course of the week of writing to Champe, when he told him that the rewards which he had promised to his associates would be certainly paid on the delivery of Arnold; and in the mean time, small sums of money would be furnished for casual expenses, it being deemed improper that he should appear with much, lest it might lead to suspicion and detection. That five guineas were now sent, and that more would follow when absolutely necessary.

Ten days elapsed before Champe brought his measures to a conclusion, when Lee received from him his final communication, appointing the third subsequent night for a party of dragoons to meet him at Hoboken, when he hoped to deliver Arnold to the officer. Champe had, from his enlistment into

the American legion, (Arnold's corps,) every opportunity he could wish to attend to the habits of the General. He discovered that it was his custom to return home about twelve every night, and that previous to going to bed he always visited the garden. During this visit the conspirators were to seize him, and being prepared with a gag, intended to have applied the same instantly.

Adjoining the house in which Arnold resided, and that in which it was designed to seize and gag him, Champe had taken out several of the palings and replaced them, so that with care and without noise he could readily open his way to the adjoining alley. Into this alley he meant to have conveyed his prisoner, aided by his companion, one of two associates who had been introduced by the friend to whom Champe had been orginally made known by letter from the Commander-in-Chief, and with whose aid and counsel he had so far conducted the enterprise. His other associate was with the boat prepared at one of the wharves on the Hudson River, to receive the party.

Champe and his friend intended to have placed themselves each under Arnold's shoulder, and to have thus borne him through the most unfrequented alleys and streets to the boat, representing Arnold, in case of being questioned, as a drunken soldier whom they were conveying to the guard-house.

When arrived at the boat the difficulties would be all surmounted, there being no danger nor obstacle in passing to the Jersey shore. These particulars, as soon as known to Lee, were communicated to the Commander-in-Chief, who was highly gratified with the much-desired intelligence. He directed Major Lee to meet Champe, and to take care that Arnold should not be hurt. The day arrived, and Lee with a party of dragoons left camp late in the evening, with three led horses; one for Arnold, one for the Sergeant, and the third for his associate, never doubting the success of the enterprise, from the tenor of the last received communication. The party reached Hoboken about midnight, where they were concealed in the adjoining wood—Lee with three dragoons stationing himself near the

river-shore. Hour after hour passed—no boat approached. At length the day broke and the Major retired to his party, and with his led horses returned to camp, when he proceeded to headquarters to inform the General of the disappointment, as mortifying as inexplicable. Washington having perused Champe's plan and communication, had indulged the presumption that at length the object of his keen and constant pursuit was sure of execution, and did not dissemble the joy such conviction produced. He was chagrined at the issue, and apprehended that his faithful Sergeant must have been detected in the last scene of his tedious and difficult enterprise.

In a few days, Lee received an anonymous letter from Champe's patron and friend, informing him that on the day previous to the night fixed for the execution of the plot, Arnold had removed his quarters to another part of the town, to superintend the embarkation of troops, preparing (as was rumored) for an expedition to be directed by himself; and that the American legion, consisting chiefly of deserters, had been transferred from their

barracks to one of the transports; it being apprehended that if left on shore until the expedition was ready, many of them might desert. Thus it happened that John Champe, instead of crossing the Hudson that night, was safely deposited on board one of the fleet of transports, from whence he never departed until the troops under Arnold landed in Virginia! Nor was he able to escape from the British army until after the junction of Lord Cornwallis at Petersburgh, when he deserted; and proceeding high up into Virginia, he passed into North-Carolina near the Saura towns, and keeping in the friendly districts of that State, safely joined the army soon after it had passed the Congaree in pursuit of Lord Rawdon.

His appearance excited extreme surprise among his former comrades, which was not a little increased when they saw the cordial reception he met with from Lieutenant-Colonel Lee. His whole story soon became known to the corps, which reproduced the love and respect of officer and soldier, heightened by universal admiration of his daring and arduous attempt.

Champe was introduced to General Greene, who cheerfully complied with the promises made by the Commander-in-Chief, as far as in his power; and having provided the Sergeant with a good horse and money for his journey, sent him to General Washington, who munificently anticipated every desire of the Sergeant, and presented him with a discharge from further service,* lest he might in the vicissitudes of war, fall into the enemy's hands, when if recognized, he was sure to die on a gibbet.

* When General Washington was called by President Adams to the command of the army prepared to defend the country from French hostility, he sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Lee to inquire for Champe, being determined to bring him into the field at the head of a company of infantry.

Lee sent to Loudon County, where Champe settled after his discharge from the army, and learned that the gallant soldier had removed to Kentucky, and had soon after died.

SERGEANT CHAMPE.

A BALLAD OF THE REVOLUTION.

COME, sheathe your swords! my gallant boys,
And listen to the story,
How Sergeant Champe, one gloomy night,
Set off to catch the tory.

You see the General had got mad,
To think his plans were thwarted,
And swore by all, both good and bad,
That Arnold should be carted.

So unto Lee he sent a line,
And told him all his sorrow,
And said that he must start the hunt,
Before the coming morrow.

Lee found a sergeant in his camp,
Made up of bone and muscle,
Who ne'er knew fear, and many a year
With tories had a tussle.

Bold Champe, when mounted on old Rip,
All buttoned up from weather,
Sang out "good-by!" cracked off his whip,
And soon was in the heather.

He galloped on toward Paulus Hook,
Improving every instant—
Until a patrol, wide awake,
Descried him in the distance.

On coming up, the guard called out,
And asked him where he's going—

To which he answered with his spur,
And left him in the mowing.

The bushes passed him like the wind,
And pebbles flew asunder.
The guard was left far, far behind,
All mixed with mud and wonder.

Lee's troops paraded, all alive,
Although 'twas one the morning,
And counting o'er a dozen or more,
One sergeant is found wanting.

A little hero, full of spunk,
But not so full of judgment,
Pressed Major Lee to let him go,
With the bravest of his reg'ment.

Lee summoned Cornet Middleton,
Expresséd what was urgent,
And gave him orders how to go
To catch the rambling Sergeant.

Then forty troopers, more or less,
Set off across the meader;
'Bout thirty-nine went jogging on
A-following their leader.

At early morn adown a hill
They saw the Sergeant sliding;
So fast he went, it was not ken't,
Whether he's rode, or riding.

None lookéd back, but on they spurred,
A-gaining every minute.
To see them go, 'twould done you good,
You'd thought old Satan in it.

The Sergeant missed 'em, by good luck,
And took another tracing,
He turned his horse from Paulus Hook,
Elizabethtown facing.

It was the custom of Sir Hal
To send his galleys cruising,
And so it happenéd just then,
That two were at Van Deusen's.

Straight unto these the Sergeant went,
And left old Rip, all standing,
A-waiting for the blown cornet,
At Squire Van Deusen's landing.

The troopers didn't gallop home,
But rested from their labors;
And some 'tis said took gingerbread
And cider from the neighbors.

'Twas just at eve the troopers reached
The camp they left that morning.
Champe's empty saddle, unto Lee,
Gave an unwelcome warning.

"If Champe has suffered, 'tis my fault;"
So thought the generous Major:
"I would not have his garment touched
For millions on a wager!"

The Cornet told him all he knew,
Excepting of the cider.
The troopers, all, spurred very well,
But Champe was the best rider!

And so it happened that brave Champe
Unto Sir Hal deserted,

Deceiving him, and you, and me,
And into York was flirted.

He saw base Arnold in his camp,
Surrounded by the legion,
And told him of the recent prank
That threw him in that region.

Then Arnold grinned, and rubbed his hands,
And e'enmost choked with pleasure,
Not thinking Champe was all the while
A "taking of his measure."

"Come now," says he, "my bold soldier,
As you're within our borders,
Let's drink our fill, old care to kill,
To-morrow you'll have orders."

Full soon the British fleet set sail!
Say! wasn't that a pity?
For thus it was brave Sergeant Champe
Was taken from the city.

To Southern climes the shipping flew,
And anchored in Virginia,
When Champe escaped and joined his friends
Among the picinnini.

Base Arnold's head, by luck, was saved,
Poor André was gibbeted.
Arnold's to blame for André's fame,
And André's to be pitied.

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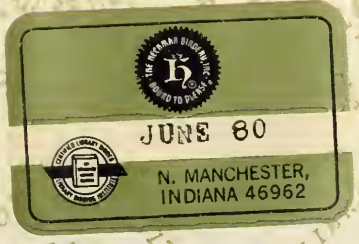
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